

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4897
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 3012

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BG
SUBJECT: WHAT CAN ZIA DO FOR AN ENCORE?

REF: DACCA 2969

1. ALL THE CAMPAIGNING, COUNTING AND CONGRATULATING IS OVER, AND ZIA MUST GET ON WITH THE TASK OF GOVERNING BANGLADESH. BY ALL MEASURES, HE NOW HAS AN EXPANDED MANDATE TO IMPLEMENT HIS PLANS FOR DEVELOPING BANGLADESH, AND WE UNDERSTAND FROM A CONVERSATION THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD WITH SAIFUR RAHMAN, ONE OF ZIA'S CLOSEST ADVISORS WHO HOLDS THE COMMERCE PORTFOLIO, THAT ZIA INTENDS TO EXERT BOLDER AND MORE VISIBLE PUBLIC LEADERSHIP THAN HE DID IN PRE-REFERENDUM DAYS.

2. A SMALL BUT NAGGING DOUBT EXISTS HERE IN DACCA, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE FOREIGN COMMUNITY, THAT ZIA,S
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MANDATE IS SOMEWHAT COMPROMISED BY HIS LARGER-THAN-LIFE 88 PERCENT VOTER TURNOUT. THEY POINT OUT THAT MOBILIZING 88 PERCENT OF ANY COUNTRY'S ELECTORATE IS A TREMENDOUS ACHIEVEMENT, EVEN MORE SO FOR A NATION LIKE BANGLADESH WITH SUCH POOR COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES. SOME OBSERVERS, INCLUDING THE AUSTRALIANS, THINK THE ELECTORAL ROLLS WERE TAMPERED WITH, IF NOT BY ZIA'S DIRECT

ORDERS, THEN BY OVER-ZEALOUS LOCAL ORGANIZERS. WE FIND ALSO THAT THE PARTICIPATION FIGURES STRAIN ONE'S CREDULITY, BUT THERE IS NO HARD EVIDENCE YET OF BALLOT BOX TAMPERING. WE FIND IT DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT ZIA, FULLY AWARE OF HIS POPULARITY AND MINDFUL OF BHUTTO'S TROUBLES, WOULD ENCOURAGE THE REPORTING OF FALSE RETURNS. IT SEEMS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THE ENTIRE BUREAUCRACY, FROM PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORS TO PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS, WAS MOBILIZED TO GET OUT THE VOTE, AND THEY CAJOLED AND PRODDED WHOLE VILLAGES TO VOTE EN MASSE. WITH OVER 21 THOUSAND POLLING STATIONS, EACH ONE HAD ONLY TO ACCOMMODATE SLIGHTLY OVER 1500 VOTERS TO HAVE 34 MILLION VOTES CAST.

3. THE FIRST THING ON ZIA'S ITINERARY WILL BE TO ATTEND THE COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF NATION CONFERENCE, FOR WHICH HE WILL LEAVE MONDAY, JUNE 6 (SEPTTEL). IN LONDON, HE WILL HAVE A CHANCE TO MINGLE WITH THE COMMONWEALTH'S LEADERS, INCLUDING INDIAN PRIME MINISTER DESAI. HIS MEETINGS WILL ADD TO ZIA'S CREDENTIALS AS A WORLD STATESMAN AND WILL NO DOUBT BE HEEVILY PUBLICIZED IN DACCA.

4. UPON HIS RETURN TO DACCA, ZIA IS LIKELY TO PLUNGE INTO HIGHLY VISIBLE WORK IN AN ATTEMPT TO IMPLEMENT HIS 19-POINTS. HE HAS ALREADY TOLD HIS ADVISORS, ACCORDING TO THE AMBASSADOR'S CONVERSATION WITH SAIFUR RAHMAN, THAT EACH OF THEM MUST VISIT THE RURAL AREAS HENCEFORTH AT LEAST TWICE A MONTH IN ORDER TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE MASSES. ANOTHER TOP OFFICIAL, THE SECRETARY OF RELIEF AND REHABILITATION, REMARKED AT A DINNER PARTY AT THE AMBASSADOR'S LAST NIGHT: CONFIDENTIAL

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"ZIA REALLY MEANS TO IMPLEMENT HIS PROGRAM. HE WILL WORK US TILL WE DROP*"

5. ZIA MAY ALSO MAKE SOME CHANGES IN HIS COUNCIL OF ADVISORS, RETIRING SOME OF THE OLDER MEMBERS AND INCLUDING A FEW POLITICIANS FROM ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM. POLITICIANS SUCH AS ATAUR RAHMAN KHAN (REFTTEL), MIZANUR RAHMAN CHOUDHURY AND ABDUL MALEK UKIL OF THE MODERATE AWAMI LEAGUE FACTION, AND KHAN A. SABUR, MAULANA ABDUS SOBHAN AND ADVOCATE SHAFIQUIR RAHMAN FROM THE RIGHTIST MUSLIM CIRCLES ARE THE NAMES MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED FOR ADDITION.

6. WHILE ZIA DISPLAYED A REMARKABLE ABILITY TO MOBILIZE THE MASSES MAY 30, HE WILL NEED EVEN MORE SKILL TO KEEP SPIRITS HIGH DURING THE COMING MONSOON WITH ITS INEVITABLE CONCOMITANT FLOODING AND LOST RICE CROPS. HE MUST ALSO KEEP AN EYE OVER HIS SHOULDER ON THE ARMY, FOR JEALOUSLY IS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN BANGLADESH ARMY POLITICS. IF ZIA RETAINS HIS CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF POSITION, HE WILL BE FRUSTRATING MEN LIKE

GENERAL ERSHAD, WHO FEELS IT IS NOW HIS DUTY TO BE CHIEF OF STAFF,
AND GENERAL DASTAGIR, WHO MAY SIMPLY BE JEALOUS OF ZIA'S
POPULARITY. HAVING RISEN SO HIGH SO FAST, ZIA MUST BE
CAUTIOUS LEST HE, LIKE CAECAR, BE BETRAYED BY HIS
CLOSEST ASSOCIATES.
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